

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device, the  
2 method comprising:

3 accessing a voice message system;  
4 retrieving, over a public telephone network, a voice message from the  
5 voice message system;  
6 generating from the retrieved voice message a digital audio file  
7 representing said message; and  
8 sending, using at least one Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the digital  
9 audio file ~~representing said message~~ to a service subscriber.

1 Claim 2 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein sending the digital  
2 audio file includes sending an E-mail to the service subscriber with the generated  
3 digital audio file as a file attachment to said E-mail.

1 Claim 3 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein the step of accessing a  
2 voice message system includes the steps of:  
3 contacting said voice message system by placing a call to said voice  
4 message system; and  
5 controlling said voice message system by transmitting at least one  
6 DTMF signal to said voice message system.

1 Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 3, wherein said at least one DTMF signal is  
2 a password which is required to be supplied to said voice message system before  
3 messages can be retrieved.

1 Claim 5 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2 receiving a reply to said sending the digital audio file; and

3 deleting the retrieved message from said voice message system in  
4 response to receiving said reply.

1 Claim 6 (previously presented): A method of operating a communications device, the  
2 method comprising:

3 accessing a voice message system;

4 retrieving, over a public telephone network, a voice message from the  
5 voice message system;

6 generating a digital audio file representing said message;

7 storing the retrieved voice message in a memory device from which  
8 the service subscriber can retrieve messages by telephone;

9 sending, using at least one Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the digital  
10 audio file representing said message to a service subscriber;

11 receiving a reply to said sending the digital audio file;

12 deleting the retrieved message from said voice message system in  
13 response to receiving said reply; and

14 in response to receiving said reply, deleting the retrieved message  
15 from the memory device.

1 Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 receiving an E-mail message including a telephone number and an  
3 audio file; and

4 initiating a telephone call using said telephone number.

1 Claim 8 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device, the  
2 method comprising causing the device to:

3 ~~accessing~~ access a voice message system;

4 ~~retrieving~~ retrieve, over a public telephone network, a voice message  
5 from the voice message system;

6                   ~~generating~~ generate a digital first audio file representing said voice  
7           message;  
8                   ~~sending~~ send, using at least one Internet Protocol (IP) packet, the  
9           digital first audio file ~~representing said message~~ to a service subscriber;  
10                  upon receiving an E-mail message in response to said sent digital first  
11           audio file, said E-mail message further including a telephone number and ~~an~~ a second  
12           audio file; ~~initiating~~ initiate a telephone call using said telephone number;  
13                  ~~monitoring~~ monitor to detect a speech signal followed by a period of  
14           silence; and  
15                  upon detecting said period of silence, ~~playing~~ play the second audio  
16           file.

1           Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   storing a first prompt message; and  
3                   determining from subscriber input when the first prompt message should be  
4           loaded onto said voice message system.

1           Claim 10 (previously presented): The method of claim 9, further comprising:  
2                   placing a call to said voice message system; and  
3                   loading said answering voice message system with the first prompt  
4           message.

1           Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:  
2                   determining from subscriber input when a second prompt message  
3           should be loaded onto said voice message system.

1           Claim 12 (original): The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of:  
2                   placing an additional call to said voice message system; and  
3                   loading the second prompt message into said voice message system.

1 Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 9, wherein the step of determining from  
2 subscriber input when the first prompt message should be loaded includes the step of:  
3 accessing a prompt message schedule generated from subscriber input.

1 Claim 14 (currently amended): A method of controlling a voice message system,  
2 comprising using a communication device to:  
3 ~~receiving~~ receive an E-mail message indicating that a voice message  
4 retrieved from said voice message system and forwarded to a service subscriber was  
5 reviewed;  
6 in response to receiving said E-mail message, ~~accessing~~ access said  
7 voice message system; and  
8 ~~controlling~~ control said voice message system to delete said retrieved  
9 voice message.

1 Claim 15 (original): The method of claim 14, wherein the step of accessing said  
2 voice message system includes:  
3 placing a telephone call to said voice message system over a telephone  
4 network; and  
5 sending a control signal to said voice message system over said  
6 telephone network causing said retrieved voice message to be deleted from said voice  
7 message system.

1 Claim 16 (original): The method of claim 15, wherein a voice message retrieval and  
2 forwarding device is used to place said call and to send said control signal, the  
3 method further comprising the step of:  
4 in response to receiving said E-mail message, operating the voice  
5 message retrieval and forwarding device to delete a copy of the retrieved voice  
6 message from a storage device included in the voice message retrieval and forwarding  
7 device.

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): A method of controlling a voice message system,  
2 comprising:

3 receiving at a communication device an E-mail message indicating  
4 that a voice message retrieved from said voice message system and forwarded to a  
5 service subscriber was reviewed;

6 operating a subscriber computer system to automatically generate said  
7 E-mail message when a user of the subscriber computer system accesses an E-mail  
8 message which includes said retrieved message as an attached audio file;

9 in response to receiving said automatically generated E-mail message,  
10 said communication device accessing said voice message system by placing a  
11 telephone call to said voice message system over a telephone network; and

12 said communication device sending a control signal to said voice  
13 message system over said telephone network causing said retrieved voice message to  
14 be deleted from said voice message system.

1 Claims 18-23 (canceled)

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): A communication device, comprising:

2 means for accessing a voice message system;  
3 means for retrieving a voice message from the voice message system  
4 over a public telephone network;

5 means for generating from the retrieved voice message an E-mail  
6 message including the retrieved voice message as an attached audio file; and

7 means for sending the E-mail message to a service subscriber.

1 Claim 25 (original): A device for controlling a voice message system, comprising:

2 means for receiving an E-mail message indicating that a voice message  
3 retrieved from said voice message system and forwarded to a service subscriber was  
4 reviewed;

5 means for accessing said voice message system in response to  
6 receiving said E-mail message; and  
7 means for controlling said voice message system to delete said  
8 retrieved voice message.

1 Claims 26-28 (canceled)

1 Claim 29 (currently amended): A method of operating a communications device  
2 coupled to a plurality of voice messaging systems, which are physically distinct units  
3 from said communications device, and to a computer system corresponding to a user  
4 of the communications device, the method comprising the steps of causing the device  
5 to:

6 ~~accessing~~ access the plurality of voice message systems corresponding  
7 to the user;

8 ~~retrieving~~ retrieve voice messages from at least some of the plurality  
9 of voice message systems; and

10 ~~forwarding~~ forward the retrieved voice messages to said computer  
11 system using at least one IP packet per message.

1 Claim 30 (original): The method of claim 29, wherein the step of forwarding the  
2 retrieved messages includes:

3 generating at least one digital file including audio data; and  
4 transmitting said digital file to said computer system.

1 Claim 31 (original): The method of claim 30, wherein transmitting said digital file to  
2 said computer system includes:

3 sending said digital file as an attachment to an E-mail.

1 Claim 32 (original): The method of claim 30, wherein said plurality of voice message  
2 systems includes a first voice message system located at a first premises and a second  
3 voice message system located at a second premises which is physically remote from  
4 said first premises.

1 Claim 33 (original): The method of claim 32, wherein the step of accessing the  
2 plurality of remote voice message systems includes:  
3 initiating a telephone call to the first voice message system.

1 Claim 34 (original): The method of claim 32, wherein the step of accessing the  
2 plurality of remote voice message systems includes:  
3 establishing a digital communication channel between said  
4 communications device and the second voice message system; and  
5 sending at least one IP packet to said second voice message system to  
6 control said second voice message system.

1 Claim 35 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the step of accessing the  
2 plurality of remote voice message systems further includes:  
3 initiating a telephone call to the first voice message system.